

POSTAL NEWS

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- 1. U.S. lodges concerns on postal reform bill. Nov 6, 2010.**
- 2. Has the U.S. Postal Service Become a Criminal Enterprise? . Nov 5, 2010.**
- 3. Work Reorganization Hurts Postal Workers . Nov 6, 2010.**

1. U.S. lodges concerns on postal reform bill

Kyodo News, Saturday, Nov. 6, 2010

The United States has expressed strong concern about the postal services reform bill, saying it will give preferential treatment to the Japan Post group, a document obtained by an opposition lawmaker showed Friday.

The document is believed to be the minutes of a meeting in Geneva on May 21 between Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Michael Punke and Shinichi Kitajima, Japan's ambassador and representative to international organizations in Geneva.

Responding to an inquiry by Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker Itsunori Onodera, who obtained the document, Takashi Morita, vice minister for internal affairs and communications, said at a Lower House panel meeting the U.S. may see postal reform as a nontariff trade barrier in future talks on Japan joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP).

The government of Prime Minister Naoto Kan aims at winning Diet approval for the postal reform bill, which seeks to roll back the bulk of the postal privatization measures, during the current Diet session.

According to the document, Punke told Kitajima that the postal reform bill is intended to give preferential treatment to the Japan Post group and that the group will expand its business in the life insurance and postal savings sectors if the bill is approved.

A senior European Union official present at the meeting accused Tokyo of failing to respond to concerns about the bill harbored by the United States and the EU, the document showed.

The European official urged Japan to do its duty as a member of the World Trade Organization. The document did not touch on Kitajima's remarks during the meeting.

Kan showed a positive stance on launching talks to join the TPP, which calls for member nations to remove all tariffs on goods, services, government procurement and intellectual property, in principle.

2. Has the U.S. Postal Service Become a Criminal Enterprise?

By Eric L. Wattree

November 5th, 2010

[Beneath The Spin]

As anyone who frequents this column knows, I'm all but fixated on bringing corruption within the postal service to an end.

It's not simply because I'm haunted by the feeling of leaving a job undone, but because I've long since recognized that as a microcosm of the nation as a whole, as the postal service goes, so goes America.

So as I sat here on election night this week watching Americans cut their own throats, it's like deja-vu. It reminded me of what I watched happening to postal workers as a union rep over 20 years ago. Back then, just as now, when I tried to warn the people of what I saw so clearly, it was like spitting in the wind. The people were content to live their lives from day to day not wanting to get involved, and totally apathetic to what was happening to the people around them.

It would have been so easy to correct the situation at the time, because that was before corruption had become institutionalized within the agency, and there were still people around who understood that the primary role of any United States government agency was to protect American ideals, and to be in the very forefront of the fight to protect the rights of American workers.

At that time all an employee had to do was document criminal corruption on the part of a postal official, and no matter who it was, the official would be held accountable. I know that for a fact, because I was personally responsible for ending the careers of several people very high in the chain of command. But now, managers are promoted and given awards based on their willingness to be ruthless and corrupt.

The people simply stood by and passed the scalpel that was used to cut their own throats. They allowed themselves to be seduced by power, and they were much more interested in their own personal interest than they were about the conditions under which many of their coworkers were forced to suffer. You see, at the time the postal service was engaged in a classic example of divide and conquer. The agency under-adjusted the workload for part of the employees, and overloaded others. Then they'd point to the "performance" of those with a lesser workload to justify the harassment of those who were overloaded.

I remember the very moment that I recognized the slippery slope that the postal service had embraced. I was in a meeting discussing the future of a manager who had poked a female employee in the nose. As part of the negotiations, the area manager called in a fellow union rep into the meeting and promoted him into management on the spot just to show me the goodies that awaited me if I only had good sense to play ball. The manager involved ended up biting the dust; but the corrupt area manager later became the postmaster.

That strategy of divide and conquer served two useful purposes. First, it served to drive a wedge between the workers. Secondly, it both conditioned and desensitized all the workers to the gross harassment and underpayment of their coworkers.

After all, it wasn't harassment they were witnessing. It could be rationalized this way: "All they're doing is trying to make those lazy employees as good an employee as I am. If they'd just do their jobs as efficiently as I do, they'd leave them alone and pay them for the work that they do."

So when I approached the employees to discuss the importance of sticking together and serving as witnesses against the harassment and the underpayment of their abused coworkers, it was like trying to get someone to step up in defense of Nancy Pelosi at a Tea Party convention. They'd actually get angry at me for trying to defend "those lazy deadbeats."

Then as the years passed many of the veteran warriors of the labor movement retired from the union, along with those professionals in management who understood the importance of public service, and who also understood that postal employees were the postal service's most valuable asset in helping to meet the agency's goals. But now, in far too many cases, just like in our overall political environment, these professionals have been replaced with self-serving cronies who are undereducated, who don't know or care anything about the history or tradition of the positions they hold, and who can always be depended upon to put their personal interest before that of the agency, or the people they represent.

Here's a prime example of that. As many of you know, we've been calling for the removal of both Postmaster General John E. Potter and Inspector General David C. Williams since March of this year for running what we compared to a "latter-day plantation." Well, Postmaster General Potter just recently announced his retirement--under what conditions I don't know. But read the responses of the respective presidents of the American Postal Workers Union, and the National Association of Letter Carriers below:

President William Burrus, American Postal Workers Union: "I have no inside information about the reason for Potter's decision, and no reason to believe that his retirement was demanded by the Board of Governors; but if it was, the Board has made a terrible mistake. The Postal Service is at a crossroads, and its relevance in American society is being questioned. The U.S. Postal Service needs a leader like John Potter to ensure its continued viability . . . filling Potter's shoes will be a major challenge. Postal workers are losing a strong advocate for the USPS and its employees."

President Fredric V. Rolando, National Association of Letter Carriers: ". . . Although we have had profound strategic differences with Jack in recent years . . . He was an honorable partner in collective bargaining and served his country well during a very difficult period in the history of the Postal Service."

"Jack?" "An honorable partner?"

Here's what Arbitrator Sherrie Rose Talmadge had to say in her December 2, 2009 decision regarding the time fraud of employees under the watch of "Jack" the "honorable partner":

"Management's violations were so egregious over a period of many years that punitive damages were awarded to deter the service from further clock ring violations."

I don't know about others, but if a mugger is robbing me blind, I don't want the police who show up to be on a first-name basis with him.

Thus, as a direct result of their apathy and refusal to become involved, postal employees have allowed employee abuse to become institutionalized, and many of the people that they've elected to represent them have been conditioned to accept it as business as usual.

Therefore, now when government documents are falsified to modify the employees' time to steal their wages, instead of viewing it as a federal crime with a penalty of five years in federal prison as prescribed in 18 U.S.C. § 1001, many of their representatives view it with a yawn, and handle it as a routine grievance. This allows the agency to treat any violation of that law as a mere business expense, as it continues to rob the employees of millions of dollars a day.

One attorney charged that the agency run by this "honorable partner" who's "a strong advocate for the USPS and its employees" of being in violation of the RICO Act -- The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act-- the law passed by congress to go after the Mafia. And he was absolutely right. Forcing employees to share their wages with the postal service under duress is nothing short of extortion-- blackmail, use of intimidation or force in order to obtain something - money, information, and so forth.

The only difference is, instead of robbing the employees in the parking lot by threatening their lives with a gun, they're robbing them in the office and threatening their families' lives with a pen. Then when the employees scream for help, instead of getting the police, they get a union official who refers to the mugger as "an honorable partner." This kind of robbery has become so blatantly routine in the postal service that now it's done by memo, such as the following:

Sent: Monday, February 01, 2010 11:28 AM

Effective Tuesday, Feb 2, 2010 all delivery supervisors will be required to stay until all their carriers are back. Unless specifically documented and requested, no extra time will be given without my personal approval. No exceptions!

Any questions, call me.

Thanks

Joe Digiacomio SOM-2

Now I'm suddenly hearing from many of the very same employees who didn't want to get involved when they could have nipped this in the bud. Now they're begging for outside assistance, because they've elected people to represent them who won't bother to return their phone calls, refuse to give them copies of documents used against them

by management ("I can't give you a copy of the documents. **THEY'RE UNION PROPERTY.**") and either don't have the sense, or the inclination, to use the union's numbers and political clout to demand that federal crimes be prosecuted as **CRIMES**, not simply grievances.

As a result, corruption has become rampantly pervasive throughout the agency. It's been factored into the postal service's bottom line for so long now that it has become an essential part of the agency's very survival. So at this point, it's gone far beyond irridication without outside intervention, because they've got a generation of managers and union officials who don't know any other way.

So as I sat here watching the election returns coming in, I sat in horror and had an uneasy feeling of deja-vu - because I fear that all of America is doomed to suffer a fate that I know all too well--and real soon.

For more columns by Eric L. Wattree please see wattree.blogspot.com Contact him at Ewattree@Gmail.com

"Speaking Truth To Empower."

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3. Work Reorganization Hurts Postal Workers

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 06 November 2010 18:48

Canada Post's work reorganization scheme known as the Modern Post is being implemented first in Winnipeg -- and the harm it's doing to postal workers is already clear. The Winnipeg local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers has set up a blog for members in the city and beyond to talk about how they're being affected and what to do about it: [The Workers' Struggle with the Modern Post](#).

Meanwhile, negotiations for the contract that covers most CUPW members are getting underway. The union leadership has produced a discussion paper, [The Future of Canada Post](#).

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